

Draft version

NEW MODELS FOR WBL

One of the NEW WBL project aims was to review work based learning schemes in partner countries for examining the conditions that contribute to good WBL generally as well as taking into account national and regional contexts, sectoral needs and local development strategies.

Project partners identified challenges, discussed and agreed on three flexible WBL models that respond to different environments and needs. The first model is more appropriate for situations where implementation of VET is mainly school based, but there is a need to introduce apprenticeship approach. Implementation of this model does not require big changes in the legislative framework and introduction takes maximum 2 years. The second model which is based on and continues the first one is more complex, it proposes possible changes in regulatory framework and implementation of it takes minimum 4 years. The third one is the so called 'dream model' which does not fit into current legislative frame and needs at least 5 years to be fully introduced. The model descriptions are followed by recommendations to policy makers and will be presented to and discussed with different stakeholder groups in Bulgaria, Latvia and Slovenia for amendments and improvements.

CHALLENGES

- 1. Skills mismatch between VET graduates occupations and labour market needs, lack of skill forecasting, Skills of VET graduates do not respond to employers expectations
Ensuring adequate VET systems response to labour market needs in terms of qualifications and knowledge, skills and competences of VET graduates**

Employers are often not satisfied with the knowledge, skills and competences of the VET graduates. Furthermore, VET schools produce graduates in occupations that are not needed; on the other hand, companies lack skilled workers in several sectors. Besides this insufficient compliance of VET with the needs of labour market, there is no effective system in place for the identification of current and future qualifications and skills needs. Career guidance for VET occupations starts too late, is too little integrated in the current school systems and stops too early, especially for VET students, due to the assumption that VET students already made their choice.

- 2. Improving awareness and attractiveness of WBL / VET among**
 - **pupils, parents (improved career guidance)**
 - **companies**

Although that WBL and apprenticeship is on the (political) agenda for the past years, there is still a lack of information about WBL/apprenticeship among companies, especially SMEs, and especially in a regional context, but also among pupils and their parents. They lack information on what WBL/apprenticeship is (the difference to previous work placements), the opportunities and benefits for companies and for students. In general, VET occupations have a low image; and enrolment in VET career path is decreasing. As apprenticeship as such does not yet exist, there is no information on its image in the public. In some countries, apprenticeship is considered as appropriate only for "blue-collar" workers.

3. Ensuring WBL/apprenticeship an equally recognized place in the VET system as school-based VET (financially)

VET schools used to have an exclusive role in the provision of vocational training. They face the situation to share their responsibilities with new partners. This step is even more difficult, if tasks are shared and transferred from the public to the private sector. The major concern of VET schools is whether companies can assure the required quality in training content and its appropriate provision.

The financing of VET school and centers depends mostly on the number of VET students and their training duration in the school. With the introduction of WBL and apprenticeship, the VET students will spend considerably more time in companies and outside the VET school, reducing the financing the VET school receives for the student (less teaching hours at school, ...) This makes it (financially) unattractive for VET schools to take an active role in transition from the school-based to a more WBL-based VET system.

Apprenticeship/WBL completely lacks support structures. The current VET systems are designed to support school-based VET. The involvement of employers and their representative organizations exists mostly only formally on national level. On regional level exists no structures at all, and cooperation between VET schools and companies depends on the initiative of the school. Furthermore, in Eastern Europe chambers and other employers organizations are organized voluntary and it is an open issue, which roles and responsibilities are entrusted to them by governments.

At least in some countries, policy level lacks also some strategic vision for the development and future of WBL and apprenticeship.

4. Quality assurance: Qualification of company mentors and tutors, Verification of skills, Support network (for SME)

How can companies ensure an appropriate quality of trainings is a major concern of the VET schools? No support network exists for employers. Especially SME would need support to get involved in WBL/apprenticeship (finding candidates, offering places, ...) and acquire the needed trainings / competences for trainers (tutors) in companies, as well as for the verification of skills and networking with other companies in WBL (at sectoral level).

Requirements for companies' tutors are being prepared. In some countries, no trainings have been organized. In others, the training provisions for tutors are separate initiatives (financed short term with EU funds), often not coordinated at national or regional level.

VET schools are staffed with teachers; the schools have difficulties finding staff that has the capacity and competences 1) to motivate and find companies to get involved in VET and 2) offer support to companies in organizing the apprenticeship/WBL.

An open issue is also the verification of skills (acquired in apprenticeship/WBL) and how it will be organized – who takes which responsibilities.

MODELS

MODEL 1 – Getting started for WBL / apprenticeship

This model covers a timeframe of one to two years and focusses on measures that can be implemented more or less without changes in the legislative and regulative framework.

- **Guidelines / action plan for the introduction and implementation of WBL / apprenticeship**
 - Prolonging the period VET students spend in companies (if not already regulated for over 50%)
 - Provision of information and counselling materials for WBL/apprenticeship for companies, VET schools and VET student (and their parents)
 - Provide counselling to IVET schools to deal with WBL and apprenticeship
 - More and better awareness raising campaigns *aimed at companies*, especially at SMEs, companies need to be prepared to take youngster into their teams
 - More and better awareness raising campaigns *aimed at schools*, pupils and their parents
 - Creation and maintaining a register for companies providing WBL/apprenticeship by sectors
 - Creation and maintenance of a platform informing about WBL and apprenticeship places
 - Identification of good WBL practices and creating conditions for their promotion and multiplication
 - Plan to change VET curriculum to modular program
 - Stimulate the remuneration of WBL students and apprentices

- **Improvement of VET system response to labour market needs**
 - Create the conditions for regular mid- and long-term forecasting of labour market needs in terms of qualifications and knowledge, skills and competences of VET graduates (Elaboration of annual reports on short term forecast on employers needs in terms of knowledge, skills and competences, mid- and long-term skill forecasting, labour market changes and other challenges)
 - Regulated enrolment in VET school based on qualifications forecasts
 - Definition of curriculum and time schedule for WBL / apprenticeship, skills and competence profile the VET students has to acquire with more active participation of employers
 - Prepare learning outcomes for WBL / apprenticeship training based on skills needs forecasts
 - Improve the match-making process between VET students and companies, so that both sides have an offer to choose from

- **Better career guidance**
 - Intensification of VET promotion through regular organization of VET fairs at regional/national level, job-shadowing placement, guided company visits for school pupils for better career orientation, skill competitions, ... activities aimed at parents
 - Obligatory involvement of companies (their representative organisations) in the career guidance provision
 - Better support for VET students in career planning

- **Improve the assessment of practical training/WBL /apprenticeship**
 - Introduction of a student's skills portfolio registering the individual progress in achievement of learning outcomes defined

- Definition of responsibilities of VET teachers and in-company trainers in assessment process – current / interim and final
- **Ensuring qualified VET teachers and in-company trainers for organization and provision of quality practical training/WBL/apprenticeship**
 - Improvement of VET teachers qualification
 - Restructuring of duties of VET teachers, adaptation to new needs
 - Elaboration of a national / regional training program for in-company tutors (extension / revision)
 - Organized and regulated provision of in-company tutors training
 - Equip organization (e.g. VET schools or chambers) with the competences and capacity to train in-company tutors
- **Development of support measures to companies providing WBL / apprenticeships:**
 - analysis of what support is needed
 - development of locally/regional support measures for companies
 - Development of materials for WBL/apprenticeship for companies
 - Development of materials for WBL/apprenticeship for VET students
 - national coordination of support network (information materials, trainings, platform, exchange of good practices ...)
- **Better stakeholders involvement and establishment of networks to promote, provide and create the conditions for WBL/apprenticeship:**
 - Local and regional partnerships between VET schools and sectoral organization, with regional employers representative organizations (chambers) and regional governments
 - National partnership recognized at government level
 - Definition of responsibilities and tasks for these stakeholder groups (regulative framework)
 - Annual regional meetings of stakeholders in WBL: exchange of results, experiences and knowhow, planning for the future

MODEL 2 – Making WBL/apprenticeship a success

This model is based on the findings and solutions in Model 1. It proposes possible changes of the existing legislative regulations and aims at the further development of the solutions described in Model 1. Its timeframe cover 4- 5 years.

- **Implementation of WBL / apprenticeship**
 - More flexibility in the VET allowing more individualization of students
 - Regulate and stimulate the remuneration of WBL students and apprentices
 - Implement VET curriculum in modular programmes
- **Maintaining a VET system responsive to labour market needs**
 - Implement regular mid- and long-term forecasting of labour market needs in terms of qualifications and knowledge, skills and competences of VET graduates (Elaboration of annual reports on short term forecast on employers needs in terms of knowledge, skills and competences, Mid and long-term skill forecasting, labour market changes and other challenges)

- Regular monitoring of enrolment in VET school based on qualifications forecasts
 - Ensuring active participation of employers in the definition of curriculum and time schedule for WBL / apprenticeship, skills and competence profile the VET students has to acquire
 - Regular up-date of learning outcomes for WBL / apprenticeship training based on skills needs forecasts
 - Implement tools and measures for effective match-making process between VET students and companies
- **Implementation of evidence-based VET policy with focus on WBL/apprenticeship development**
 - Regular research on labour market needs
 - Regular research on future skills needs
 - Research on impact assessment of the VET reform process, recommendations for improvements / corrections, policy development
 - Plan and prepare for an expansion of apprenticeship not only horizontally (other sectors and occupations) but also vertically (post-secondary and tertiary level of education)
- **Maintaining an effective career guidance system**
 - Intensive VET promotion through effective measures targeted at students and their parents
 - Strong involvement of companies (their representative organisations) in the career guidance provision
 - High support for VET students in career planning
- **Ensuring support to all actors in planning, organization and provision of practical training/WBL/apprenticeship on regular basis**
 - Elaboration of analyses and recommendations to up-date educational programmes and standards in compliance with the results from the researches
 - Establishment and maintaining a portal for WBL/apprenticeship with good practices, information, support, ...
 - Regular up-dating of materials for WBL/apprenticeship for companies
 - Regular up-dating of materials for WBL/apprenticeship for VET students
 - Establishing a system for constant improvement of VET teachers and in-company trainers qualification
- **Maintaining of effective support measures to companies providing WBL / apprenticeships:**
 - Monitoring companies needs for support
 - Provision of locally/regional support measures for companies
 - Provision of materials for WBL/apprenticeship for companies
 - Provision of materials for WBL/apprenticeship for VET students
 - national coordination of support network (information materials, trainings, platform, exchange of good practices ...)
- **Strong stakeholders involvement through national, regional and local (sectoral) networks to promote, provide and create the conditions for WBL/apprenticeship:**
 - National, regional and local partnerships for VET are active and involved in all VET processes with clear responsibilities and tasks for these stakeholder groups (regulative framework) and the respective capacities

- Enlarging the role of sector expert councils with better administrative and financial capacity – formalization of their roles
- Increased role of local/regional governments and involvement in regional partnerships
- **Further improvement of the quality assurance:**
 - Defining of indicators for quality assurance in line with European initiatives like the European Quality Framework for WBL
 - Elaboration of a methodology for their implementation in practice

MODEL 3 – Shaping the future of WBL/apprenticeship

This model offers a vision and propose a path for the future independent from the current legislative and regulatory framework, but based on the solution developed in the first two models. The implementation timeframe of this model is above 5 years.

- **Implementation of WBL / apprenticeship**
 - Coexistence of different options and paths in VET
 - Offering a high degree of individualisation and flexibility to both, students and companies
 - Competence-based,
 - learning to learn
 - digital
- **VET system and labour market needs**
 - Responsive to future trends/ Functioning mechanism for translation of labour market needs into VET school enrolment plans and learning outcomes for acquiring qualification in different professions
- **VET policy with focus on WBL/apprenticeship development**
 - Implementing corrective measures in legislative basis and methodological support provided to VET schools and companies at national and regional/ local level based on regular monitoring of progress and identification of problems and difficulties
 - Extend WBL/apprenticeship to all industry sectors
 - Establish WBL/apprenticeship vertically in post-secondary and tertiary level of education
 - Functioning mechanism for effective cooperation between VET stakeholders at sectoral level as well as national and regional/ local level in design, implementation, monitoring and improvement of actions for WBL/apprenticeship development
- **Maintaining an effective career guidance system**
 - Responsive to company needs and skill forecasts (regional economic development)
 - Ensuring various opportunities in terms of information, counseling and involvement in practical activities that support informed choice of occupation by students (and their parents) and of appropriate for their interests, abilities and plans VET option/path
 - Providing support to VET students in the transition from VET option/path to another
 - Providing support to VET graduates in transition from school to labour market/ higher level of education
- **Ensuring support to all actors in planning, organization and provision of practical training/WBL/apprenticeship**

- Regular researches among VET schools and companies aimed at identification of areas of support that need improvement
- Functioning system for provision of methodological support at national level - regular update of materials for VET schools, companies and VET students, development of new ones related to implementation of new legislative regulations, to solving identified problems and difficulties etc.
- **Maintaining of effective support measures to companies providing WBL / apprenticeships:**
 - In accordance with modern learning and teaching methods
- **Networks and cooperation:**
 - National, regional and local (sectoral) partnerships for VET are active and involved in all VET
 - Transnational partnerships
- **Further improvement of the quality assurance:**
 - Student-centered approach in provision of VET
 - Established quality assurance mechanism covering all phases of the quality cycle, as well as school-based and WBL – from planning to introduction of corrective measures at VET system and providers' level (VET schools and companies providing WBL)

RECOMMENDATIONS TO POLICY MAKERS:

1. National partnerships (VET in larger responsibility, not only Ministry of Education) → Economic Social Council? Use existing structures and enlarge their responsibility
 - a. Monitoring of labour market needs
 - b. Skill forecasting
 - c. Strategy for national career guidance
 - d. Image campaigns
 - e. Strategy for support to companies: tutor training, development of materials, measures, etc.
 - f. National coordination
 - g. Round table on VET
 - h. Financing plan / resources (structural funds, national funding, social partners, ...)
 - i. Monitoring and evaluation of the reform process
2. Regional /local partnerships → VET schools, sectoral organisation, regional chamber/employers representatives, create new structures, ensuring VET school and companies work together in the benefit of student, company and the economy
 - a. Skill forecasting and monitoring
 - b. Implementing career guidance and image campaigns
 - c. Implementation of support to companies (support network)
 - d. Implement the tutor training
 - e. Financing
 - f. Monitoring and evaluation of the reform process
3. Financing of VET schools (not based on time a student spends in VET school), setting new criteria
 - a. Stimulating WBL and quality
 - b. Responsiveness to labour market needs

4. New profile of VET teachers (changing their university education)
 - a. Including WBL in the education of the teachers (initial and continuous)
 - b. work placements
 - c. remuneration of teachers more attractive and better recognition of work experiences outside school system
5. Provision of methodological support to VET schools and companies on regular basis with respect to planning, organization and provision of WBL
 - a. Selecting a partner
 - b. Concluding partnership agreements – roles and responsibilities in compliance with existing regulatory framework
 - c. Definition of competences to be acquired by the student during the training in the company
 - d. Implementation of control over the quality of training provision
 - e. Communication of the VET teacher with the student during in-company training
 - f. Monitoring student's progress – current / interim assessment
 - g. Final assessment
 - h. Keeping the necessary documentation related to WBL up to date

